

The Columbian Exchange

AP World History
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What is the Columbian exchange?

- Term was coined by Historian Al Crosby of the University of Texas
- Contact between any two peoples geographically separated from one another results in an 'exchange' of physical elements
- The three main elements are: animals, plants, and microbes



Animals

- Llama only domesticated animal in Latin America
- Cattle, horses, pigs, sheep => Americas
- Changed use of land



Animals

- Significant environmental impact
- Animal fertilizer became important part of agricultural system



Plants

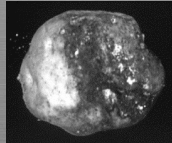


- Europeans brought cash crops to Americas, brought new crops back
- Maize, potato, tomato, tobacco, beans, cacao, and cotton => Europe
- Sugar, rice, wheat, coffee, bananas, and grapes => Americas

Plants

- New crops flourished in Americas
- Many indigenous plants crowded out by new crops and weeds
- Old world crops stronger – had a more competitive original environment
- Economy shifts to large scale agricultural production, labor intensive
- Europeans adopt crops from Americas

Plants



Old World Microbes

- European disease was particularly virulent
- Smallpox, measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, chicken pox, bubonic plague, scarlet fever and influenza were the most common microbial diseases exchanged
- Nearly all of the European diseases were communicable by air and touch.
- The pathway of these diseases was invisible to both Indians and Europeans

European Belief

- There was no germ theory at the time of contact.
- Illness in Europe was considered to be the consequence of sin
- Indians, who were largely “heathen” or non-Christian were regarded as sinners and therefore subject to illness as a punishment

Disease Raced Ahead

- In most cases, Indian peoples became sick even before they had direct contact with Europeans
- Trade goods that traveled from tribe to tribe through middlemen were often the vector of disease
- There is little or no evidence to think that Europeans intentionally infected trade items for trade with Indians to kill them

Smallpox

- Central Mexico – 25 million in 1519 to less than one million in 1605
- Hispaniola - One million in 1492 to 46,000 in 1512
- North America – 90% of Native Americans gone within 100 years of Plymouth landing

Smallpox in the Americas



Smallpox



Why were Europeans immune?

- Has everything to do with their original environments
- Most pathogens originate with animals or insects
- Domesticated animals and plants were more numerous in Europe
- Greater diversity meant more ecological protection

Demographic Significance

- Native American population decreases
- Europeans need labor, import African slaves
- Europeans move to Americas to oversee economic production
- Mixing of all three populations occur in varying degrees